

January 11, 2013

City of Alameda Planning Board
City Hall
2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 190
Alameda, CA 94501

Re: Draft Zoning Ordinance Amendments, for the North Park Street Planning Area

Dear Planning Board,

As a resident of the Wedge neighborhood that you propose will be part of a “Gateway” to Alameda I wish to express my opposition to several elements of the Zoning Ordinance Amendments under discussion.

1. First and foremost, I and my neighbors are strongly opposed to supporting any plan that does not include a commitment to including green space in our neighborhood. The City and Planning Board has a responsibility to develop urban plans that support a quality of life for residents. The Wedge has many environmental challenges due to the mixing of businesses into a historic neighborhood and the City’s history of in-filling industrial uses into the space between historic homes in the Wedge. The current plan provides an opportunity for the City to more properly balance the business and residential uses in this neighborhood and create a Gateway we can all be proud of. If you go ahead with a plan that excludes open space you are actively supporting the decline of quality of life for Wedge residents that, over time, will likely lead to an eventual lack of desire to inhabit that area and the abandonment and destruction of one of the most historic neighborhoods in the City. Is this what you want your “Gateway” to be?

Wedge residents have been active for years in advocating for the development of the Old Island High School site into a green space for the Wedge, as it is a central property in a neighborhood wedged between major city thoroughfares (Tilden and Park Streets). I and other residents established a 501c3 project (Project LEAF) which many of you are familiar with and have been working for years with both the City and school district to support greening on this site. Hundreds of Alameda residents support this plan yet the City seems determined to go ahead and create more in fill on this land through development of high density affordable housing. The Wedge wants open space, not more in-fill! I will remain active in the fight for you to support Project LEAF’s vision of a green plan for the OIH site. The Wedge neighborhood deserves a green space and the OIH site is the perfect space for this! I urge you to work in cooperation with Alameda Unified School District to support a green use for the Old Island High site as Wedge residents and residents across the island have expressed a strong desire for this. We know that the City intends to enter into a land purchase or exchange of some kind with AUSD for this land so I urge you to identify it for open space and NOT for high density housing. If this space cannot be identified in the current planning process as

intended for green space, then I urge you to identify another piece of land that can be used as green space for our neighborhood.

2. Second, I am not in support of the ever rising height limit proposed for Park Street. I am in support of a maximum 40' height limit and no more to keep in concert with existing buildings and to prohibit the City of Alameda from taking on the character of a City downtown (like Oakland) rather than an appropriate town feel.
3. Third, I wish to support the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society's recommendations to change parking lots and parking garages in the Mixed Use Zone from Conditionally Permitted to Not Permitted and change offices from Permitted by-right to Conditionally Permitted in the Mixed Use Zone. Both of these changes better support the residents of our neighborhood by supporting a more appropriate integration of homes and businesses. I already live directly across from a parking lot that is used for various purposes including a tow lot. I sleep with earplugs and am still frequently woken in the middle of the night by the backing up and unloading of towed vehicles. A parking lot is not an appropriate use for a mixed use zone. As a resident I would also like to be able to consider offices on a case by case basis rather than have them permitted by-right without a community approval process. This seems fair.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Melanie Wartenberg

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